



State of Connecticut

SENATE

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MEMBER
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INTERNSHIP COMMITTEE
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

February 7, 2011

Senator Casano, Representative Gentile, members of the Planning and Development Committee:

I urge the committee to vote in favor of Proposed House Bill No. 5142 and Proposed House Bill No. 5259. Both bills are titled: AN ACT REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THE LOCATION OF GROUP HOMES.

These bills require a public hearing prior to the approval of any new group home within a municipality.

This past summer, a controversy arose when it was learned that the nonprofit Klingberg Family Centers had been talking with the Department of Children and Families about opening one or more group homes for troubled teenagers in Bristol neighborhoods.

Neighbors had lots of questions, but they were provided with few answers and no real forum for their questions to be addressed. They were concerned. They protested loudly and Klingberg soon announced it had dropped the idea.

Right now, there are no state laws which require that notice be given regarding the placement of group homes, which results in deficient communication.

That is unreasonable. Neighborhoods should be informed in advance of any plans to open a group home in their local area. A public hearing would accomplish that goal.

Bristol State Representatives Whit Betts and Frank Nicaastro agree with me that the law needs to change. This is a bipartisan effort to get people answers to their questions so that future controversies like the one we witnessed in Bristol this summer do not take place. Group homes serve a tremendous purpose in our society, but information about those homes should be provided to the public whenever there are plans to place them in any community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Welch', written over a horizontal line.

Jason Welch

State Senator representing the 31st Senatorial District (Bristol, Harwinton, Plainville, Plymouth)